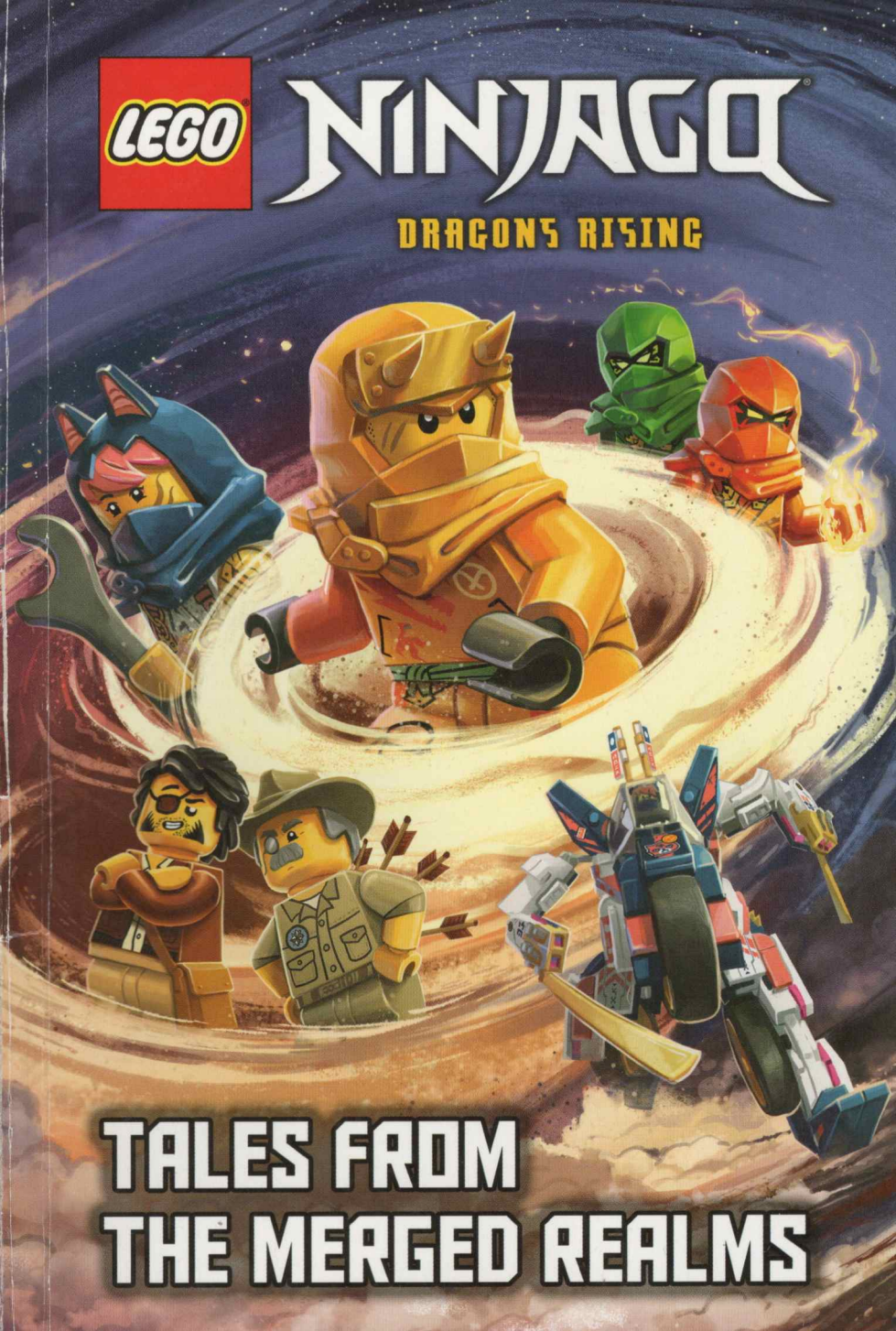
LEGO NINJAGO

DRAGONS RISING



TALES FROM THE MERGED REALMS

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TALES FROM THE MERGED REALMS

By Stacia Deutsch

Random House New York

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 6

THE WAY IN 8

THE EXPLORER'S WISE WORDS 26

SEALING THE CRACKS 44

GLOSSARY 62

INTRODUCTION

It began with a storm. The winds blew, the earth cracked, and the sky split into pieces. In the blink of an eye, the whole world changed—all the known outside realms mysteriously combined with the world of Ninjago.

They call it the Merge.

The new reality is a tough test for Arin, a wannabe ninja, and Sora, a talented inventor.

The two friends must find a way to win a mech race and build themselves a better future.

Since the Merge, there are new treasures to be found. Clutch Powers knows that this is his chance to win the Explorer of the Year prize. Will he spot a trap on his path to success, too?

Dreadful aftershocks continue to threaten the united world. While Master Wu and other ninja are missing, it is up to Lloyd and Kai to save the day. Can they manage without their friends' help?

Turn the page to discover a whole new world of adventures. . . .

THE WAY IN

It's my first official race," Sora told Arin. "This mech has to rock it!"

Arin and Sora were best friends. They lived together on a rooftop overlooking the Crossroads, a neighborhood on the outskirts of Ninjago City that boomed in the aftermath of the Merge. Their home was simple, but they hoped they could afford a better place one day.

"When you say 'rock it,' you mean the mech's gotta win, right?" Arin passed Sora a wrench, then went back to practicing Spinjitzu. He'd taught himself the moves to be like his hero, Lloyd, the Green Ninja. Arin's execution was

good, but he fell backward on the landing and crashed to the floor.

"Winning is too basic." Sora laughed, giving him a hand up. After tightening a bolt, she stepped back to look at the mech's arm. The parts she and Arin had found in the junkyard

didn't fit well. There was a lot of rust that would never clean off, and the mech's arm creaked as it moved. But overall, it worked. She loved tech!

"That trophy will be ours," Sora said as she searched through a pile of parts from a dumpster behind the dumpling restaurant. "When I say this mech's gotta ROCK IT, I mean it has to finish first by a mile. Leave the competition in the dust." She pinched her lips

together and added, "We gotta show Kreel who's boss!"

A voice called out across the rooftop: "Did someone say my name?"

"Kreel," Sora grunted. Kreel was an older, more experienced mech racer who had access

to all the best tech parts. She liked to brag about how great her mechs were and how many trophies she'd won. Sora had raced against Kreel before. This time, Sora's mech was going to win!

Sora quickly grabbed a large cloth and threw it over her mech to hide her work.

Kreel chuckled. "I'm going to cross the finish line first." She pointed at the mech's foot,

sticking out from beneath the cloth. "You might as well send that thing back to the junkyard."

Sora sighed. "Why are you here?"

"I wanted to make sure you'd heard the news." Kreel stepped toward Sora.

"News?" Sora felt her pulse quicken.

"The entry fee has increased," Kreel said with a smirk.

Sora's face fell. She didn't even have the original fee yet. How was she going to pay more?

"Give up, Sora. You never had a chance." Kreel's sinister laugh echoed in the air as she walked away.

"Argh!" Sora pulled the sheet off her mech and studied her rusty, mismatched invention. "What are we going to do?!"

"I think—" Arin started to respond, but Sora moaned.

"We have no money. No decent parts." Sora walked to the edge of the roof and stared out at the twinkling lights of the city. Her shoulders fell. "No hope."

Arin stepped beside her. "You're the best mech driver." The sounds of the city filled their ears. Thousands of people were out there, creating new lives for themselves, since the

Merge had destroyed their homes.

"We're going to find a way to pay the entry fee," Arin announced.

"We'll get better parts," Sora declared.

"Your mech will win that trophy!" Arin shouted into the night. "This is the Crossroads!"

"This is our kingdom," Sora said proudly. Her mood lifted.

❑❑❑

They went down to the street, eager to get what they needed. Arin set up on a street corner, where he did Spinjitzu moves for the crowd, then passed around a hat for donations. People flocked to see him, and he imagined his hat was filling with coins. He was proud of his excellent idea to make money!

Sora remembered a big dumpster behind the autobody shop that she hadn't searched in a while. She was thrilled at the thought of the treasures that could be waiting for her there.

Hours later, the two took their bounty back to the rooftop.

"I bet you found some amazing parts!" Arin said.

"I bet you raised a ton of cash!" Sora replied.

On the count of three, they showed each other their bounty.

steam filled the air. "This won't change things, but take one bite, Sora. I promise, you'll feel better!"

"Arin!" she exclaimed. "This pie is the answer to one of our problems!"

"It is?"

"Yes," Sora said, grabbing a ladder and opening the mech's chest. "Now, hand me that paper clip! I'm going to fix this mech!"

❑❑❑

"Pay your fee here." Mr. Frohicky was sitting at the entry booth. The race manager was as old as the mountains and had a tongue that could stretch across the desk.

"Uh, how about dessert instead?" Arin set the appleberry pie on the counter.

"It has to be money—" Mr. Frohicky began, then he suddenly stopped. "That smells amazing!"

"You can have it if you let Sora race," Arin said. "What do you say?"

"Deal!" Mr. Frohicky agreed, snatching up the pie with his tongue.

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The race began with a bang. Sora's mech made a great start, even bounding ahead of Kreel's for a few minutes. But after the first turn, problems

began. On a small hill, the mech lost an arm. At the second curve, the paper clip snapped and a suction tube dragged behind the mech until it finally fell off.

Sora and her mech came in last place.

"Too bad," Arin said, running up to her. He was sure she was sad.

"Bad?" Sora gave him a happy hug. "No! It was great. The best race ever!"

Arin tipped his head to where Kreel was accepting the trophy. "Best race? Ever?"

"Oh, yes! But this one will be even better!" Sora handed Arin a poster for the next mech race, coming up in a week. Instead of a trophy, this race was for prize money! "I'll fix the mech. Can you make another pie?"

"Of course." Arin glanced over at Mr. Frohicky, who was licking pie crumbs off his lips. "This is the Crossroads!"

"This is our kingdom!" Sora cheered.

THE EXPLORER'S WISE WORDS

"The Underworld Umbrella. A Spatula from the Cursed Realm. A Scented Relaxation Candle from the Realm of Madness." Clutch Powers recited the list of treasures to himself as he hacked his way through the jungle.

The Merge, though a horror for many, had brought opportunity, too. There were new sightings of artifacts that had been declared "LF," as in "Lost Forever." The bravest members of the Explorers' Club packed their bags and immediately headed out.

Clutch Powers was the bravest of them all.

"Umbrella. Spatula. Candle." All he needed was to bring home one of these items and he would finally be crowned Explorer of the Year! The crowd would cheer his name!

"Clutch . . . Clutch . . . Clutch . . ."

"Clutch?"

He shook his head to clear it. There, past the last vines, at the base of the Three Peaks, were two explorers he knew: Smythe and Underhill.

They were having tea, but they looked like they'd spent the last week crawling through a hot, humid swamp. And they smelled pungent.

"We thought you were joining us on our explorations," Underhill said as Clutch approached.

Clutch brushed a speck of dirt off his white shirt. "I work alone."

"Well, lad, I don't know what you've been doing the past week, but you're late to the party, as usual." Underhill chuckled. "I was first to arrive

in the Underworld." He held up a slightly smoldering Umbrella. "You can cross this treasure off the list."

Smythe said, "And I found the Spatula of the Cursed Realm!"

"Shippleton is out looking for the Scented Relaxation Candle from the Realm of Madness," Underhill said. "He should be here by now. I wonder what is taking him so long."

While they waited for Shippleton to arrive, the two explorers stared at Clutch.

Clutch stared back, but he wondered if resting

up for the trip and taking a helicopter to the spot just behind that vine curtain wasn't his best idea. Oh, but it sure was easy!

"I scoff at the Umbrella. Spatula. And Candle." Clutch gave a fake laugh and puffed out his chest. "I'm on track to bring back an even greater treasure than any of those!"

"What, exactly?" Underhill asked.

"I, well, I, the, I . . . ," Clutch stalled, trying to remember if there was a fourth item on the Explorers' Club's Most-Wanted List.

"Where *is* Shippleton?" Smythe interrupted Clutch's hard thinking.

Underhill replied, "Perhaps he's lost?"

"Of course! He's lost!" Clutch realized this was his moment. "I knew something bad might happen to him! I mean, it can't be easy navigating with an arrow in your back. He hasn't removed that arrow since he returned from his last expedition, right? What an odd souvenir. . . . Anyway." He grinned. "I'm here for the rescue."

Smythe tucked the Spatula in his bag and said, "How could you have known Shippleton would go missing?"

Clutch winked. "Explorer's intuition."

"I must say," Underhill began, "that finding a missing explorer is a very big deal. The rescuer would be granted a parade that's bigger than any

parade in the history of the Explorers' Club!"

"And certainly the task is worthy of the Explorer of the Year honor," Smythe put in.

"All-Righty-O!" Clutch exclaimed. "I'm off!" He had to beat the others to the rescue.

Clutch stepped away from the group, then glanced back at the explorers. "Not that I need to ask, but if you were looking for Shippleton, where would *you* begin?"

Each one pointed in a different way.

It was a clever trick! Obviously, that meant Clutch needed to go in another direction.

"I'll be back in a jiff," Clutch told the others. "And *I'll* have Shippleton with me!"

As he hiked off, Clutch began to imagine his Explorer of the Year acceptance speech. "I humbly accept that I am the greatest explorer who ever lived. . . ."

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"Aha!" Clutch discovered a footprint outside a narrow cave entrance. He called into the darkness, "The world's best explorer, Clutch Powers, is coming for ya, Shippy-Dippy!" He followed another footprint deeper into the cave.

"This is easy!" Clutch said.

It took time, and a lot of wrong turns, but finally, Clutch found a waxy clue! He bent low to the ground and smelled the drip. It was so relaxing! "Shippleton found the candle," he

said to himself, "but where is Shippleton?" He looked around for more clues.

In his imagination, he could again hear an adoring crowd cheering his name.

"Clutch . . . Clutch . . . Clu—"

"Huh?" Clutch realized that a man was calling Clutch's name from the depths of a pit in the back of the cavern.

"Shippleton?" Clutch asked, peering through the air holes in the pit's heavy cover.

"Clutch Powers!" Shippleton was angry. "I have a bone to pick with you!"

"What kind of bone?" Clutch asked. He looked around frantically. "Rabbit? Rat? Dragon?"

"It's a saying." Shippleton sighed. "Means I'm angry."

"Angry with me?" Clutch was shocked. "But we're friends, Shippy-Dippy."

"One, do not call me that. Two, we are not friends. Three, your book has a mistake in Chapter Four!" Shippleton's voice echoed from the pit.

"Mistake?" Clutch said. "No. No. My best-selling book, *Booby Traps and How to Avoid Them*, was perfectly researched. No errors. That's absurd."

"There's a rock to your left!" Shippleton shouted up to Clutch. "Go sit there and think about it. I believe the error will reveal itself."

"Impossible," Clutch declared. But he went

to the rock and sat down. "Chapter Four is about hidden levers that will open—*AUGGGGHHHH!*" Clutch fell into the pit.

Shippleton said, "You never once mention that a rock could be used to set off the hidden entrance to a pit!" A camouflaged pit cover

slid into place as the rock tipped upright again.

"Interesting," Clutch said, realizing now that the two of them were trapped together in the dark. "Wouldn't it have been easier if you'd asked me to rescue you?"

"Exploring is never easy!" Shippleton exclaimed. "That very wisdom is etched on the back of the Explorer of the Year award."

"Yeah, I wouldn't know about that," Clutch moaned.

Shippleton looked sharply at Clutch. "Since you're the expert on booby traps, what should we do?"

Clutch groaned. "I *avoid* booby traps. It's the whole point."

"Ah, I see then. The mistake is mine," Shippleton said with a sigh. "I believe we have a problem."

"Obviously," Clutch said, scanning the vertical pit walls. They'd get out, but it might take a while. Clutch sighed. "We'll need to postpone the parade."

SEALING THE CRACKS

"Take the left, Kai. I'll go right."

"Your left or my left?" Kai asked. He surveyed the destruction and fought back exhaustion to summon his power. This was the third mergequake site that Kai and Lloyd had been to today. Sealing the cracks in the ground was difficult.

When the sixteen realms had suddenly merged into one, the entire world had changed.

Lloyd found himself alone in the Monastery of Spinjitzu. The other ninja were gone and Lloyd didn't know where they were. He was frustrated, lonely, and determined to find his friends.

Then one day, one of them showed up at the monastery. It was Kai.

Kai had disappeared in the initial Merge and then reappeared on an island that hadn't existed before. It took a long time for him to travel home through the realms.

Frequent mergequakes continued to cause

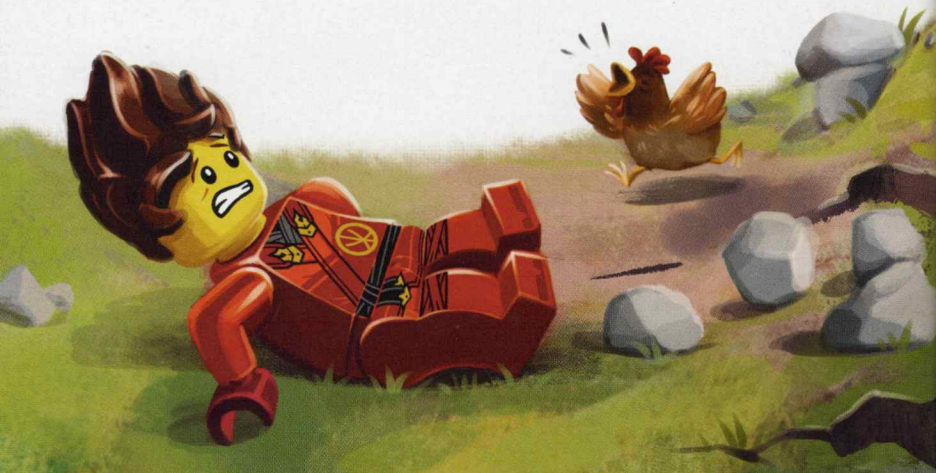
chaos and destruction. Things were so unstable that people, animals, vehicles, and sometimes entire cities were in constant danger.

Kai and Lloyd were happy to be together again, but they missed the rest of the team. They didn't know if the others would ever come back.

In the meantime, it was up to the two ninja to set things right.

Suddenly, the ground began to shake again. Lloyd lunged forward just in time. A dumpling truck spiked up from the barren ground exactly where he'd been standing just a moment before.

"Crushed by dumplings," Kai said. "What a way to go." His stomach rumbled as the two of them managed to push the dumpling truck to



the side just seconds before a used car fix-it shop appeared to fill the same spot. The owner of the car shop was standing in the doorway, along with two very scared customers.

"You saved us!" The owner of the shop shook hands with the ninja.

Lloyd said, "Hurry. We don't know what might happen next."

The man and the customers rushed toward the Crossroads, a meeting place nearby.

When the shaking stopped, Kai finally relaxed. "We did good," he said. "Coulda used some help, though."

A moment of silence fell between them as they both thought about their missing friends. Neither spoke as Kai and Lloyd boarded their ship, *Destiny's Bounty,* to return to the monastery.

Kai said, "That dumpling truck reminded me that we missed lunch! What's your vibe on noodles for dinner? I'll cook."

"Now I'm even more glad you're back!" Lloyd rubbed his belly.

"The secret is in the spicy sauce—" Kai began.

Lloyd interrupted: "Kai!"

Kai immediately assumed a fighting stance. "What?! Where? Your left or mine?"

Lloyd said, "Something strange is happening on the horizon."

Kai stared up at the sky, where Lloyd was pointing. "That's an odd shade of orange," he said.

"I think it's another mergequake," Lloyd

said, and he turned the *Bounty* around.

Kai said, "I've got a bad feeling, and it's not in my stomach!"

A few moments later, the *Bounty* hovered over a giant tear in the fabric of the world. This wasn't like any of the mergequakes they'd

already repaired. This hole was like a vacuum, pulling in everything from the nearby forest!

"Sucking is a new feature," Kai commented.

Lloyd saw that the hole was also tossing out hot lava, monsters, and creepy creatures that smelled weird. "Spitting is new, too," he said. "How's this one hole doing both of those things?"

Kai plugged his nose as a winged monkey, a dinosaur-faced creature with pungent bad breath, was thrown out of the hole. "Back off, Stinky!"

The monster hissed, then took to the sky.

"We should go stop that thing," Kai said. "Before it spreads its smell."

Suddenly, voices around them echoed: "Help!"

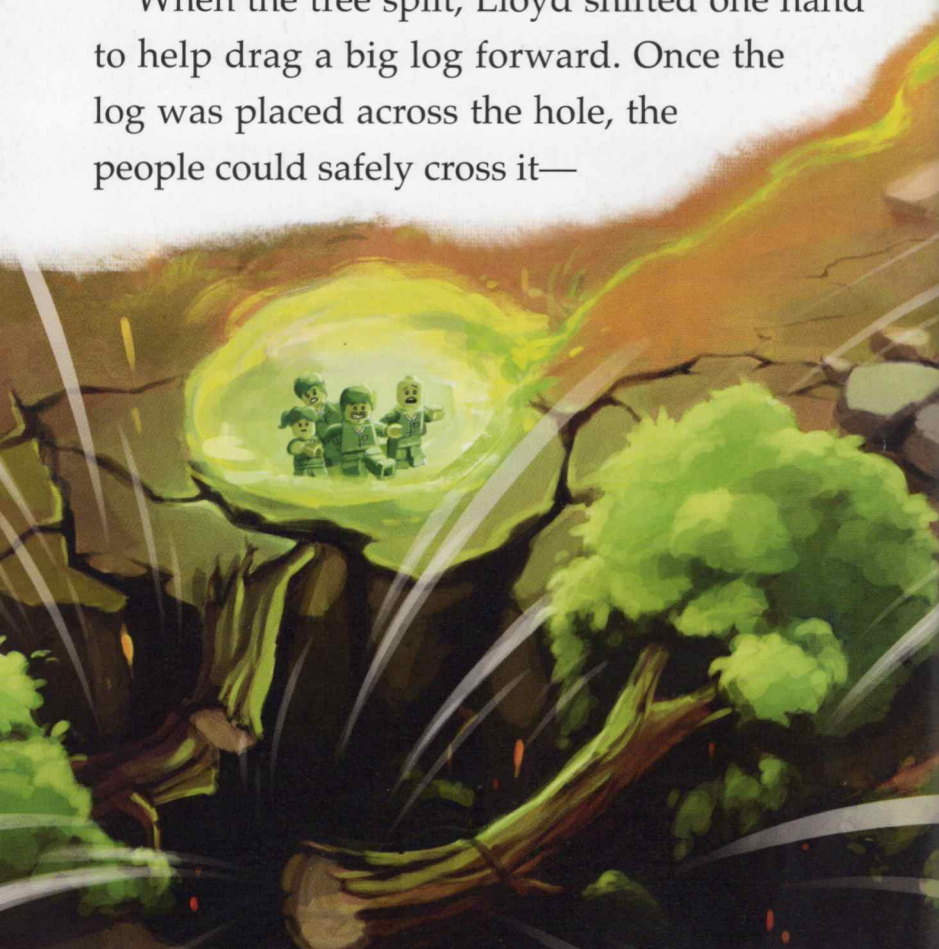
Down below, people were being sucked toward the vortex.

"We need to protect them first," Lloyd said. "Then seal the crack. Monsters can wait."

Lloyd quickly maneuvered the *Bounty* into position.

"Let's make a bridge," Kai said, and sent a blast of fire toward a tree, while Lloyd used his powers to stop the people from skidding forward.

When the tree split, Lloyd shifted one hand to help drag a big log forward. Once the log was placed across the hole, the people could safely cross it—



but then another quake hit and Lloyd lost control. The whole tree got pulled into the void!

"This is the toughest mergequake we've faced!" Kai said, knocking down another tree. That one got sucked into the hole, too. "Got any fresh ideas in that busy brain of yours, Lloyd?"

Lloyd looked around for inspiration. There were a lot more trees, but the ninja needed something bigger, heavier.

Then they saw the monkey monster, just past the last row of trees. It sat on a mountaintop, eating big rocks and watching the ninja. Was it smiling?

"Hope you're enjoying the show!" Kai called out.

Then the creature ate too many boulders and puked them back up.

"Gross," Kai said, groaning. "After we seal this crack, one of us needs to tell that thing to take smaller bites." He quickly added, "Not it!" He looked at Lloyd.

"I might have the busy brain, but Kai, you're a genius!" Lloyd exclaimed. He used his elemental power to drag some monkey-barfed rocks over from the mountain.

"Uh?" It took Kai a minute to figure out what Lloyd meant. "You're correct! I *am* a genius!" He used fire to scorch the ground, creating a trench for the stones.

Rock by rock, as the monkey creature puked them up, the ninja worked together to build a wall.

The tall wall stood strong, protecting the people and stopping them from sliding into the big hole.

"Now we have to close the crack," said Lloyd. "What's the next move, genius?"

"Uhhh," Kai stalled, hoping Lloyd would give him a hint. "A little help, Busy Brain?"

Just then, *BURP!* The mergequake spewed a fountain of molten lava. Without discussing it, the two ninja knew exactly what to do!

Kai used his fire power to push the hot goo back into the void.

And Lloyd brought on a cold wind to chill the lava and seal the hole.

The people were safe. The hole was closed, but the giant monkey monsters, and many other smelly creatures, had escaped.

Lloyd put his arm around Kai's shoulder. "It's been good to have you back, but it looks like we have to separate again."

Kai nodded. "I'll go after the monsters."

"I'll go back to the monastery and resume my search for ways to stop the quakes," Lloyd said. "Maybe Nya, Cole, Jay, Zane, and Master Wu

will find their way back like you did."

The friends stood together for a long beat.

"I guess this means no delicious slurping noodles," Lloyd said at last.

"I could tell you the recipe," Kai suggested.

"Nah," Lloyd said. "I'll wait for you to come home."

They both laughed.

There was work to be done before they'd see each other again.

GLOSSARY

Arin

Arin is a superfan of the ninja team who has taught himself a rough form of Spinjitzu. After his home and family disappeared because of the Merge, Arin teamed up with Sora.

Clutch Powers

He is a famous adventurer and member of the Explorers' Club. Recently, he's been more focused on staying famous than exploring.

Crossroads

This neighborhood outside Ninjago City was the epicenter of the Merge. It's a giant melting pot of people, cultures, and architecture styles from all realms.

Destiny's Bounty

Originally an old pirate ship, *Destiny's Bounty* is the ninja team's flying headquarters.

Explorers' Club

This is a members-only club of travelers, scientists, and archeologists who explore the world of Ninjago. Its most distinguished members are Shippleton, Underhill, and Smythe.

Kai

Kai is the Fire Ninja. Separated from his team by the Merge, he reunited with Lloyd to investigate the mergequakes.

Lloyd

The legendary Green Ninja is the leader of the ninja team. After the Merge, he found himself alone at the Monastery of Spinjitzu.

The Merge

This was a mysterious and violent event that resulted in the Ninjago world uniting with the legendary outside realms. Now the formerly inaccessible realms, such as the Underworld, the Cursed Realm, the Realm of Madness, and many more, are islands or continents all over the world.

mergequake

These aftershocks of varying strength continue to affect the united world, often causing chaos and destruction.

Monastery of Spinjitzu

This is Master Wu and his ninja team's main headquarters and training center.

ninja team

This group of young warriors was recruited by Master Wu and trained in the ancient martial art of Spinjitzu to protect the world of Ninjago. Besides Lloyd and Kai, the team includes Jay (the Lightning Ninja), Cole (the Earth Ninja), Zane (the Titanium Ninja), and Nya (the Water Ninja).

Sora

Sora loves technology and is a talented inventor. Seeking a fresh start in Crossroads after the Merge, she met Arin on her path. Arin is the heart of their duo, and Sora is the brains.

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